



National Child Care Information Center

A service of the Child Care Bureau

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QUALITY RATING SYSTEMS in STATUTE

Quality Rating Systems (QRS) are a method to assess, improve and communicate the level of quality in early care and education settings. QRS are systemic, addressing multiple aspects of early care and education through a uniform approach that is available throughout a State. QRS are part of a State's broader quality improvement continuum, and have the following five common elements: 1) standards; 2) accountability; 3) program and practitioner outreach and support; 4) financing incentives specifically linked to compliance with quality standards; and 5) parent education.

As of July 2005, 11 States (Colorado, District of Columbia, Kentucky, Maryland, Montana, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Vermont) reported having a Quality Rating System with multiple levels available throughout their State.

The approach chosen by a State to implement its Quality Rating System depends on several factors, including the needs of the State, the goals of the system, and the State's political context. For example, States that embed a Quality Rating System in statute may have a history of rooting other programs in statute. Additionally, operationalizing a QRS within statute depends on the type of system the State has chosen to implement. In a rated license system, each individual rated license is a property right that needs a repeals process to revoke, so it will require statutory language. Finally, States may proceed by statute when their regulatory authority is insufficient to authorize every aspect of a QRS.

The following is information about Quality Rating Systems in State statute. Several States have established a Quality Rating System through legislative action, including Kentucky, North Carolina, and Tennessee. Also included is information about Colorado's School Readiness Initiative that is related to a QRS. The States are listed in alphabetical order, with a brief description of the QRS. Additional information about States and their systems are available under the Quality Rating System topic in the Popular Topics section of the NCCIC Web site at <http://nccic.org/poptopics/index.html#qrs>.

STATES

Colorado: Qualistar Rating System

■ In 2004, Educare Colorado and the Colorado Office of Resource and Referral Agencies (CORRA), merged their organizations and became Qualistar Early Learning. The Qualistar Rating System is a tool to measure quality in licensed center and family child care homes, and preschool programs, for children from birth to kindergarten. The Qualistar Rating System

evaluates programs in five areas: 1) learning environment, 2) family partnerships, 3) staff training and education, 4) adult-to-child ratios/group size, and 5) program accreditation, and assigns a rating of one-to-four stars to each program.

■ House Bill 1297, the School Readiness Initiative, was unanimously passed by the Colorado Legislature, and signed into law in June 2002. In July 2002, the Colorado Child Care Commission adopted Educare Colorado's Quality Rating as the accepted rating system to fulfill the school-readiness rating system established through HB 1297. HB 1297 states:

(5) **School-readiness rating system.** The state child care commission created pursuant to section 26-6-304 shall adopt a voluntary school-readiness rating system. Such rating system shall measure the level of preparedness of and quality of services provided by a child care provider to prepare children to enter elementary school. The school-readiness rating system shall:

- (a) Measure such elements of quality of a child care facility as:
 - (i) The quality of the learning environment;
 - (ii) The quality of adult-child interactions;
 - (iii) Adult-to-child ratios;
 - (iv) Provider credentials, including recognized credentials through the state department's voluntary credentialing system developed pursuant to section 26-6.5-103 (8); and
- (v) Parent-involvement activities at the child care facility;
- (b) Be variable to inform parents, counties, and other purchasers of child care about the level of quality at a child care facility in a simple and easy-to-understand manner;
- (c) Be supported by statistically valid research as a reliable measure of quality of a child care facility;
- (d) Include a quality improvement plan that informs rated child care providers of their strengths and weaknesses and that provides such child care providers with strategies to improve the quality of their services; and
- (e) Have demonstrated effectiveness at improving the level of quality of child care providers in geographically diverse Colorado communities.

House Bill 02-1297 is available on the Web at
http://www.state.co.us/gov_dir/leg_dir/olls/sl2002a/sl.326.htm.

Additional information is available on the Web at <http://www.qualistar.org>, or contact Qualistar Early Learning at 303-339-6800.

Kentucky: STARS for KIDS NOW Child Care Quality Rating System

■ The goal of Kentucky's KIDS (Kentucky Invests in Developing Success) NOW is that all young children in Kentucky are healthy and safe, possess the foundation that will enable school and personal success, and live in strong families that are supported and strengthened within their communities. To reach this goal, 25 percent of Kentucky's Phase I Tobacco Settlement dollars will fund the early childhood initiative. Additional information about KIDS NOW is available on the Web at <http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Instructional+Resources/Early+Childhood+Development/Components+of+KIDS+NOW+Initiative.htm>.

STARS for KIDS NOW is Kentucky's voluntary child care quality rating system. STARS for KIDS NOW has four levels of quality and has quality criteria for certified family child care homes, licensed type I centers, and licensed type II centers. The quality criteria include ratios, curriculum, training, regulatory compliance, personnel (or business practices for certified family child care homes and licensed type II centers.) Information about STARS for KIDS NOW is available on the Web at <http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Instructional+Resources/Early+Childhood+Development/STARS+-+The+Childcare+Quality+Rating+System.htm>.

■ The legal authority for the STARS for KIDS NOW Program is within the *Kentucky Revised Statutes*. It states:

199.8943 Quality based child-care rating system -- Administrative regulations.

(1) The Early Childhood Development Authority shall, in consultation with child-care providers, the Cabinet for Families and Children, the Cabinet for Health Services, and others, including but not limited to child-care resource and referral agencies and family resource centers, develop a voluntary quality-based graduated child-care rating system for licensed child-care and certified family child-care homes based on, but not limited to:

- (a) Child to caregiver ratios;
- (b) Child-care staff training;
- (c) Program curriculum; and
- (d) Program regulatory compliance.

(2) The Cabinet for Families and Children shall promulgate administrative regulations in accordance with KRS Chapter 13A to implement:

- (a) The voluntary quality-based graduated child-care rating system for child-care and certified family child-care homes developed under subsection (1) of this section;
- (b) Agency time frames of reviews for rating;
- (c) An appellate process under KRS Chapter 13B; and
- (d) The ability of providers to request reevaluation for rating.

Effective: July 14, 2000

History: Created 2000 Ky. Acts ch. 308, sec. 15, effective July 14, 2000.

This document is available on the Web at <http://www.lrc.state.ky.us/KRS/199-00/8943.PDF>.

The regulations that govern the STARS for KIDS NOW Program are available on the Web at <http://www.lrc.state.ky.us/kar/922/002/170.htm> for child care centers and <http://www.lrc.state.ky.us/kar/922/002/210.htm> for family child care providers. For additional information, contact the Division of Early Childhood Development, Kentucky Department of Education at 502-564-8341.

North Carolina: North Carolina Star Rated License

■ In September 2000, the North Carolina Division of Child Development issued star rated licenses to all eligible child care centers and family child care homes. (Note: Religious-sponsored child care programs continue to operate with a notice of compliance and do not receive a star rating.) The star rated license is a voluntary licensing system, established in statute where a child care program can earn points in three different areas: 1) program standards, 2) staff education, and 3) compliance history with child care regulations.

The Division of Child Development states on their Web site that the previous licensing system did not offer enough information to parents about the quality of care their program was providing, so North Carolina moved to the star rated license system in September 2000. For example, under the previous system, a center that received an A license was meeting only minimum requirements, but parents may have thought this was the highest rating. To minimize confusion, a five star licensing system was developed because this type of rating system is typical for many products and services.

Information about North Carolina's child care rated license system is available on the Web at http://ncchildcare.dhhs.state.nc.us/parents/pr_sn2_ov_sr.asp. Additional information including program standards, education standards, compliance standards, sample star rated license, and star rated license FAQs is also available on the Web. For additional information, contact the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Child Development at 919-662-4499.

■ The legal authority for the rated license system is within the *North Carolina General Statutes, Chapter 110, Child Welfare*. It states:

Article 7
Child Care Facilities

§ 110-90. Powers and duties of Secretary of Health and Human Services

The Secretary shall have the following powers and duties under the policies and rules of the Commission:

- (4) To issue a rated license to any child care facility which meets the standards established by this Article. The rating shall be based on program standards, education levels of staff, and compliance history of the child care facility.

This document is available on the Web at

http://www.ncleg.net/EnactedLegislation/Statutes/HTML/ByChapter/Chapter_110.html.

■ Legislation designed to improve the State's Star Rated License System was passed by the North Carolina General Assembly, and will be effective January 1, 2006. A *Summary of Legislative Changes for the Star Rated License System* (July 2005) is available on the Web at http://ncchildcare.dhhs.state.nc.us/pdf_forms/Summary_rules.pdf.

Tennessee: Child Care Evaluation and Report Card Program, and the Star-Quality Child Care Program

■ In 2000 and 2001, Tennessee launched a broad program to improve child care. This program's goals are to give more information to parents and to improve the quality of child care in the State. This program includes two programs, the Child Care Evaluation and Report Card Program and the Star-Quality Child Care Program.

The Child Care Evaluation and Report Card Program is required for all licensed and approved child care providers in Tennessee. During the process of renewing a license, the State evaluates a provider on several areas of quality. Family and group homes are evaluated on the following five areas: caregiver's training and education, compliance history, parent and family involvement, business management practices, and program assessment (on-site observation). Child care centers are evaluated on the following seven areas: director's qualifications or experience, education, and training; the education, training, and previous work experience of teaching staff; compliance history; parent and family involvement; ratios and group sizes; the center's pay and benefit plans for staff; and program assessment (on-site observation).

The Star-Quality Child Care Program, unlike the Report Card Program, is voluntary. This program recognizes child care providers who meet a higher standard of quality. Once qualified for this program, providers can receive one, two, or three stars to place on their license. Each star shows that a provider meets increasingly higher standards. Both programs require a program assessment. Information about program assessments in Tennessee is available on the Web at <http://www.tnstarquality.org/html/assessment.htm>.

Additional information is available on the Web at <http://www.tnstarquality.org>.

■ Legislation was passed in June 2000 that established the Tennessee Star Quality Licensing System. The legislation is available on the Web at <http://tennessee.gov/sos/acts/101/pub/pc981.pdf>.

Regulations implementing the legislation—*Rules of Tennessee Department of Human Services Adult and Family Services Division, Chapter 1240-4-7, Report Cards and Rated Licensing for Child Care Agencies*—are available on the Web at <http://www.state.tn.us/sos/rules/1240/1240-04/1240-04-07.pdf>. Additional information about the Rules of the Tennessee Department of Human Services is available on the Web at <http://www.state.tn.us/sos/rules/1240/1240-04/1240-04.htm>.

For additional information, contact the Tennessee Department of Human Services at 615-313-4700.

The National Child Care Information Center does not endorse any organization, publication, or resource.

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